

LESSON 7: GOAL SETTING



*goal setting
tangible
achieving goals*

PURPOSE

Goal setting is the first step in managing your and your team's performance. Just setting clear, measurable goals can increase performance up to 20 percent. Goals are critical to motivation. In this lesson we will review the guidelines for goal setting, learn how to set your own performance goals and establish a mechanism for tracking and evaluating progress.

INTRODUCTION

It has been proven that specific and difficult goals, with feedback, lead to higher performance. So often we are told to "do your best." That can be in the accomplishment of a cross-country race, a basketball game, an English test or anything we want to accomplish. But what is "your best"? What if the cross-country coach said he wanted you to prepare yourself to increase your speed so you could take two minutes off your best time? How about striving for 85 percent or higher on the English test? When someone has been given goals that are specific and challenging and they are given continuous feedback the impact on the accomplishment is impressive.

Goals tell you what needs to be done. Difficult goals are an internal stimulus to push hard to accomplish them. And feedback tells you how you are doing. It points out the gap between what you have done and what you want to do. Additionally, self-generated feedback is a stronger motivator than external feedback. That means if you can establish a feedback process for yourself, you will be more motivated than if someone else provides the feedback.

It has also been proven that if the person involved has the opportunity to participate in the goal setting process, they will try harder.

Important to the goal setting process is that the individual or team is committed to the goal and will not lower or abandon it, they feel capable of attaining the goal, the goal has been made public and it has been self-set rather than assigned.

SETTING GOALS

Setting clear and specific goals offers purpose and direction for both leaders and followers. When you are in a leadership position, you and your followers should ensure that you have a set of clearly written and defined goals and priorities. Then, everyone must understand and support them.

There are several key points or guidelines that you should consider when setting goals for your team. These guidelines include:

- Make goals realistic and attainable.
- Ensure that goals lead to improved individual and team performance.

- Involve team members in the goal setting process.
- Establish as a minimum goals for training, maintenance (of appearance and personal property), discipline, morale, cohesion, and development of followers.
- Develop a program or set of policies to achieve each goal.

DEVELOPING PLANS TO ACHIEVE GOALS

Once you have analyzed a situation, you can begin setting goals based on what you want the team to accomplish. For each goal you set, you need a well-defined plan that explains how you intend to achieve it. Develop plans by identifying the task or tasks that your team must accomplish, putting them in priority, and establishing all the conditions necessary to carry out each task. Remember to consider the capabilities of your team members when assigning tasks.

Next, write the plan down on paper. This helps you to organize the details of how to reach the goal. By having something **tangible** — such as a written version of the plan — you can see exactly what you want to accomplish, when, how, and with what resources. A properly written plan can help you to remain focused on the results.

It is also important to have a method to monitor and evaluate your team's progress. This helps you and the other team members to stay on schedule and it gives you a basis to make changes to your plan, as necessary. Use a checklist or some other document that spells out exactly what the standards are that you must accomplish. Post those standards for everyone to see. Another good method of evaluation is to seek feedback from instructors or others.

Remember, as a leader, you influence your teammates by what you say, write, and most importantly, do. Every leadership situation is unique; therefore, every goal you set and every plan you develop must be flexible and adapted to each situation. You must be able to look at every situation, analyze it, and then determine exactly what actions you should take to accomplish the mission.

CONCLUSION

As you have learned, goals are critical to motivation. In this lesson we reviewed the guidelines for goal setting, learned how to set your own performance goals and established a mechanism for tracking and evaluating progress.

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